

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: SOCIAL SERVICES

DATE: MARCH 1, 2007

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS TESSIER
 O'CONNOR
 BENTLEY
 KENNY
 F. THOMAS
 MASON

COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:

SUPERVISOR SHEEHAN

OTHERS PRESENT:

ROBERT PHELPS, COMMISSIONER - DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL
SERVICES

JOAN PARSONS, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL
SERVICES

JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD

SUPERVISORS CAIMANO
 GERAGHTY
 HASKELL

TODD LUNT, HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR

HAL PAYNE, ADMINISTRATOR - WESTMOUNT HEALTH
FACILITY

NICOLE LIVINGSTON, DEPUTY CLERK

Mr. Tessier called the meeting of the Social Services Committee to order at 11:40 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. F. Thomas and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the January 26th Committee meeting subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Mr. Tessier noted that the meeting would serve as both the February and March Committee meetings and that another would not be scheduled later in the month.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Robert Phelps, Commissioner of Social Services, who distributed copies of his agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of the agenda is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Phelps apprised that agenda item number one pertained to travel requests and he noted that as per the newly instituted travel policy, all Department Heads were required to present requests for travel to their respective Committee for approval. Mr. Phelps advised that the agenda included a packet of information detailing nine (9) training events he was seeking approval for his staff to travel to. He explained that the first event was scheduled for March 9 in Rensselaer, NY for supervisory level training relative to the computer application system developed by New York State which was constantly being updated. Mr. Phelps noted that this was a one-day training course which two of his employees were scheduled to attend and the use of a County vehicle was requested.

Mr. Kenny asked if there was any indication that a fleet vehicle would be available for the travel requested and Joan Parsons, Commissioner of Administrative and Fiscal Services, noted that a meeting between herself, Mr. Phelps, William Lamy, DPW Superintendent and Frank Morehouse, Superintendent of Buildings, had been scheduled for the following day to establish Mr. Phelps' needs and to determine if vehicles would be available for the travel approved by the Committee.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Mason and carried unanimously to approve the

request for two employees (Lynn Leland and Nicole Pustolka) to travel to Rensselaer, NY on March 5th to attend 'Hands-on Training for Supervisors, Managers, Resource Users & Senior Staff', provided that a County fleet vehicle was available.

Mr. Phelps advised that the second travel request was for training on the same computer application system; however, the course was geared towards employees on the Caseworker level. He noted that three employees were scheduled to attend this training seminar, also to be held in Rensselaer, NY on March 8th and a single County vehicle would be required for this travel.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve travel for three employees, (Kristina Neel, John Kassebaum and Tina Murray), to attend the 'Hands-on Training for Caseworkers' on March 8th in Rensselaer, NY.

The third travel request, Mr. Phelps stated, was for HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program) regional training and was scheduled for March 8th at the Fort William Henry in Lake George. He apprised that three employees were scheduled to attend the training.

Because this event was scheduled so close to the Municipal Center, Mr. Kenny asked if a fleet vehicle were not available for the travel, would the employees be willing to use their own vehicles to travel to the seminar, and Mr. Phelps replied affirmatively. He added that one of the issues to be discussed at the meeting scheduled for the following day between himself, Mrs. Parsons, Mr. Lamy and Mr. Morehouse was to decide when it was in the best interest of the County to institute the use of a fleet vehicle or allow employees to travel using their own vehicle, submitting requests for mileage reimbursement.

Motion was made by Mr. Mason, seconded by Mr. F. Thomas and carried unanimously to approve travel for two employees, (Patricia Martin and Lisa Zulauf), to attend the HEAP regional meeting scheduled for March 8th in Lake George.

Mr. Phelps advised that the fourth travel request was for 'Hands-on Training for Caseworkers' scheduled for March 9th in Rensselaer, NY; he added that two caseworkers were enrolled for this training.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. F. Thomas and carried unanimously to approve travel for two caseworkers, (Christian Hanchett and Linda Doyle), to the 'Hands-on Training for Caseworkers' scheduled for March 9th in Rensselaer, NY.

The fifth travel request included in the agenda was for two caseworkers to attend a training session entitled Educating Students Without Permanent Housing, Mr. Phelps stated. He added that the seminar was scheduled for March 14th at the Desmond Hotel & Conference Center in Albany, NY and a County fleet vehicle would be required.

Motion was made by Mr. Mason, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve travel

for two caseworkers, (Julie Pearl and John Clynes), to attend the Educating Students Without Permanent Housing course on March 14th at the Desmond Hotel & Conference Center in Albany, NY.

Mr. Kenny noted that there were quite a few training sessions scheduled in a very short period of time and he asked if this was the normal course of business. Mr. Phelps replied that it was and that the training was absolutely essential for the caseworker staff.

In light of Mr. Phelps' statement, motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Mason and carried unanimously to approve the remainder of the travel requests included in the agenda which were as follows:

- 6) Travel for two foster care employees, (Maureen Taylor and Richard McNulty), to attend 'Hands-on Training for Caseworkers' in Rensselaer, NY on March 16th;
- 7) Travel for one employee, (Diane Coughlin), to attend FASP (Family Assessment and Services Plan) case recording and documentation training on March 27th at the Northeast Parent and Child Society in Queensbury, NY;
- 8) Travel for one employee, (Kerry Watkins), to attend the Id Protective Services Workers session on March 27th in Fort Edward, NY;
- 9) Travel for three employees, (Karen Judd, Lorrie Mosher and Debbie Breeyear), to attend the 2007 Child Support Enforcement meeting on March 28th & 29th at the Sagamore Hotel in Bolton Landing, NY.

Mr. Phelps apprised that an abundance of travel and fieldwork was required by his Department on a daily basis which he was unable to predict in advance. He stated that a policy would have to be developed to address the fieldwork required by caseworkers and that was one of the major issues that would be discussed by the group meeting the following day. Mr. Phelps advised that he had completed a comprehensive review of the fieldwork performed by his staff during the past five weeks. He said that he was able to chart the distance traveled each day and determined that according to this research, 20 cars would be needed to facilitate the demands of his Department on a daily basis.

On a positive note, Mr. Phelps stated that he had received notification from the OTDA (Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance), that Warren County had received the Work Incentive Fund award. He said that the incentive funds had been advanced to 58 districts with the requirement that federal participation rates imposed be met to maintain those dollars; otherwise, he noted, they would have to be refunded to New York State. Mr. Phelps apprised that only six of the 58 districts, had met the participation rate, Warren County being one of them.

Mr. Phelps advised that, for those interested, a CD containing the Department of Social Services annual reports for the past ten years was available. He added that he had provided the Board of Supervisors with one copy containing reports for the past 20 years. Mr. Phelps distributed copies of the CD to the Committee members interested and asked that they review the reports at their leisure and contact him with any questions; *a copy of the CD containing annual reports for the past 10*

years is on file with the minutes.

In closing, Mr. Phelps apprised that the final agenda item pertained to a grand jury report from Suffolk County with respect to facilitated Medicaid enrollment. He said that significant findings and recommendations had resulted from the report and Mr. Monroe had suggested that the issue be referred to the Legislative Committee for further consideration.

Mr. F. Thomas stated that he had read the full grand jury report and it was an eye-opening document which he recommended each of the Committee members review. He said the report detailed that there were enrollers of the Medicaid program who also worked for the insurance companies underwriting Medicaid policies and in one case the standards of the application were increased, over 54% had contained some type of fraud or mis-information within them. Mr. Phelps apprised that his Department's Medicaid Certification Unit was battling these issues on a daily basis and he added that his staff was in place to review the information submitted by the facilitated enrollment groups to be sure that it was accurate and complete. Mr. Phelps stated that they had noticed a great amount of information which was either lacking or questionable; he said that the bulk of their time was spent verifying the validity of these enrollments. Mr. Phelps advised that he had a hard copy of the grand jury report which he could distribute to the Committee members and there was also a website that could be visited to gain the same information.

Mr. Phelps apprised that he had received a broadcast stating that Governor Spitzer was pressing for the enrollment of an additional 1.2 million individuals in the Medicaid program; he added that over 6,000 individuals had been targeted for enrollment in Warren County alone. Fortunately, Mr. Phelps advised, a Medicaid cap was in place that would contain the local share of Medicaid costs.

Discussion ensued.

Motion was made by Mr. F. Thomas, seconded by Mr. Mason and carried unanimously to refer the issue to the Legislative Committee for further discussion.

Mr. Phelps advised that a copy of the overtime report covering the past three payroll periods was also included in the agenda for the Committee's review. Referring to the report, Mr. Kenny asked what the Medicaid COL heading pertained to and Mr. Phelps replied that it was the Medicaid cost of living and pertained to a social security increase which occurred on January 1st of each year. Mr. Phelps added that because of the volume of the change, the number of Medicaid cases affected was huge. He said that this increase was typically handled at the end of the year; however, he said, he had asked his staff to hold off on their overtime requests until January to handle the increased volume of work. Mr. Kenny asked if the work resulting from the change could be rationed out over the year to avoid overtime costs and Mr. Phelps replied in the negative. He said that the cases were considered in an incorrect status pending corrections to each and it was essential that they be made as quickly as possible. Mr. Phelps apprised that there was no local share cost for the overtime caused by the increased workload.

Mr. Kenny questioned the overtime caused by the document purge and Mr. Phelps replied that this was another high volume, short term effort which increased overtime costs. He explained that records were kept for five years and then purged to the Records Storage Department in the Municipal Center and the process was done once each year. Mr. Phelps added that the majority of this work was attributed to Medicaid cases and was therefore claimed to the Medicaid program.

Mr. Mason asked what the CPS After Hours heading pertained to and Mr. Phelps advised that this was a Child Protective Services after hours services which maintained on-call staff to investigate reports made after working hours, and was a constant cost.

Mr. Mason thanked Mr. Phelps for the efforts made by himself and his staff which had led to the award of the OTDA Work Incentive funding and Mr. Phelps stated that he would appreciate a letter expressing those thanks be forwarded to his staff from the Board. Mr. Tessier advised that a letter would be sent. *Note: Subsequent to the meeting a letter congratulating the Social Services Department Staff was sent from Chairman Thomas.*

Mr. Tessier stated that an executive session was needed to discuss the employment history of a particular person.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to declare executive session pursuant to Section 105(f) of the Public Officers law to discuss the employment history of a particular person.

Executive session was declared from 11:55 a.m. to 12:50 p.m.

Upon reconvening, Mr. Tessier advised that no action was necessary subsequent to the executive session. He explained that Todd Lunt, Director of Human Resources would be directed to set up an appointment with the Commissioner and the two directors to familiarize himself with workings of the Departments and then report back to the Committee.

As there was no further business to come before the Social Services Committee, on motion made by Mr. O'Connor and seconded by Mr. Kenny, Mr. Tessier adjourned the meeting at 12:52 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Nicole Livingston, Deputy Clerk
Typed by Amanda Allen, Legislative Office Specialist